

Determining Author's Purpose

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Identify author's purpose
- Use patterns of organization to infer author's purpose

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION

You will need photocopies for students of:

- **Student Lesson Summary**, p. 25
- **Practice Worksheets**, Levels A and B, pp. 26–27
- **Reteaching Worksheet**, p. 28

Teach

1. **Author's Purpose:** Explain that while authors may have personal reasons (such as their own enjoyment) for writing, each piece is at least partly written as a communication with readers. And every written work affects its readers. When students can identify the effects of the writing, they may be able to infer the **author's purpose**, or main intentions for the work.

- Give the following examples: If a piece is full of informative facts that educate the reader, the purpose of the writing is to inform; If the piece is full of urgent messages, arguments, and opinions, the author's purpose is to persuade; If the piece is full of humor, cheerful anecdotes, and surprising twists, the author's purpose may be to entertain.
- Lead a discussion of how students might adjust their style of reading to meet the purpose or intentions expressed in each type of informational text—informative, persuasive, entertaining. (*Sample: informative—take notes, jot down questions, summarize, paraphrase, skim and scan; persuasive—read between the lines, ask questions, formulate counterarguments, weigh evidence; entertaining—sit back and relax, read for pleasure in a comfortable place.*)

2. **Teaching Author's Purpose:** Distribute the **Lesson Summary** and review the **Academic Vocabulary**. Then guide students through the **Here's How** steps as follows.

- **Common Purposes:** Write the four common author purposes on the board as column headings. Ask students to come up with one or more examples of each type of writing found in different sections of a daily newspaper. Write their answers under each purpose. (*Sample: Front-page newspaper articles and sports reports are written to inform; op-ed columns and letters to the editor express emotions, thoughts, or ideas and can seek to persuade; humor columnists and cartoonists write to entertain.*)
- **Text Structure:** Emphasize that patterns of organization can serve as clues to author's purpose. Write on the board the following patterns of organization:

cause-effect order	chronological order	classification order
compare-and-contrast order	spatial order	inductive/deductive order

DETERMINING AUTHOR'S PURPOSE, CONTINUED

main idea and details	order of degree	problem-solution order
proposition and support	sequence order	spatial order

- **Structure and Purpose:** If necessary, remind students what each pattern looks like or review the lessons. Then ask: Which patterns of organization work well for each of the four major purposes? Record student responses in a chart such as the following.

Inform	Persuade	Entertain	Express Emotion
sequence	deductive/inductive	chronological	chronological
cause-effect	problem-solution	main idea + details	order of degree
chronological	proposition-support	spatial	spatial
classification			
main idea + details			

- **Effect and Purpose:** Lead students to understand that there are no rules linking patterns to purposes. Explain that structure is just one clue that helps a reader infer purpose, and that other clues are tone, titles and headings, direct statements of purpose, and effects on the reader. Give the example that if a reader learns a new process or procedure, one might conclude that the purpose was to inform or instruct. Ask: If you find yourself laughing a lot while you read, what might you infer about the author's purpose. (*Sample: The purpose is to entertain.*)

3. Guided Practice: Have a volunteer read aloud the example paragraph on the **Lesson Summary**. Have another volunteer state the four common author purposes. Make sure all students understand them.

- **Gather Clues:** Ask: How is the underlined passage a clue to the author's purpose? (*It contains factual information.*) Ask: What tone does this work have? (*scientific, informative*) Ask: What pattern of organization does this paragraph have? (*main idea and supporting details*) Have students read the passage silently and underline other clues to purpose. (*Sample: External skeleton made of protein and chitin, crabs, lobsters and shrimp are a few examples. Less familiar examples are wood lice, water fleas, and barnacles.*)
- **Infer Purpose:** Have students look over their underlined passages and consider the paragraph's pattern of organization. Then ask a volunteer to infer the main author purpose. (*to inform*) Why can the other three purposes be ruled out? (*There is no persuasive language, like "We need to protect endangered crustaceans," or authorial opinions, like "I think crustaceans are creepy," and the dry, factual language rules out that the author's purpose is to entertain.*)
- **Use Author's Purpose:** Ask: How well or poorly does this passage achieve the author's purpose? Why? (*Most students will think the author achieved the informative purpose well by including a lot of information in a short space.*)

DETERMINING AUTHOR'S PURPOSE, CONTINUED

QUICK CHECK. Have students listen for author's purpose as you read aloud the following passage. Then ask the questions that follow.

Lobsters are one of the most popular and high-priced dishes in many restaurants. I think it's fine for people to eat whatever they want, but few people know that, just moments before appearing on the plate, that lobster was dropped, while still alive, into boiling hot water. This practice is not only cruel, it's unnecessary. The problem is that lobsters are living, feeling creatures. So if you must order lobster, ask the restaurant to humanely kill the poor crustacean before cooking him.

1. What are some clues to the author's purpose? (*the persuasive emotional language "dropped while still alive into boiling hot water; not only cruel, it's unnecessary; living, feeling creatures; humanely kill the poor crustacean before cooking him," and the request, "if you must order lobster, ask . . ."*)
2. What is the pattern of organization used? (*problem-solution*)
3. What is the author's overall purpose? (*to persuade*)
4. How well does the author achieve this purpose? (*Most students will say pretty well, since the reader begins to feel sorry for the lobster and may be persuaded to not eat lobster, or at least to make sure it's killed humanely.*)

Practice and Apply

Activities involving author's purpose appear on pp. 26–27.

- Assign **Practice Worksheet A** to students who need more structured activities.
- Assign **Practice Worksheet B** to grade-level and above-level students.

Sample Answers: Practice Worksheet A

1. *Too often just a band-aid, Give to the charity of your choice—regularly—and really solve the problems; to persuade*
2. *Answers may include any part of the poem; to entertain.*
3. *I could always count on to welcome me home and sit with me, I really miss him; to express emotions*
4. *A crevasse is a deep crack, can be 10 or more feet deep, Crevasses occur where a glacier flows over the break of a slope; to inform*

Answer Key: Practice Worksheet B

1. *persuade*
2. *express opinion/emotion*
3. *persuade*
4. *express opinion*
5. *inform*
6. *sequence order*

DETERMINING AUTHOR'S PURPOSE, CONTINUED

7. *to inform*
8. *Sample: The passage achieves the author's purpose well by clearly explaining, in sequence order, the steps to take when first learning to cook.*

Assess and Reteach

Use these guidelines to determine if students need the **Reteaching Worksheet**.

- **Practice Worksheet A:** Students should correctly answer at least three of the four items.
- **Practice Worksheet B:** Students should correctly answer at least six of the items 1–7, and should provide a complete attempt in item 8.

For students who need reteaching, review the **Lesson Summary** including the various patterns of organization and apply it to one of the passages in **Practice Worksheet A**. Then have students complete the **Reteaching Worksheet**, p. 28.

Answer Key: Reteaching Worksheet

1. *to inform*
2. *to express an opinion*
3. *to express an opinion*
4. *to persuade*
5. *The pattern of organization is proposition and support. The author's purpose is to persuade.*